

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 2, 2003

CONTACT: Tara Conner
PHONE: (615) 741-8589

HOME REPAIR HORRORS

NASHVILLE - This summer's storms have been frequent and heavy, and they have left behind a trail of destruction across the state. Virtually all 95 counties have seen some damage from Mother Nature this year, with fall just around the corner, it's likely there will be more to come.

“Here at the Division of Consumer Affairs, we've had hundreds of calls from storm victims who've been hit twice – first by storm damage, and then by a less-than-reputable contractor,” said Consumer Affairs Director Mary Clement. “We want to make sure people know how to select a qualified contractor.”

First, talk to family and friends for recommendations, and then confirm any references a contractor gives you. Check with his subcontractors and suppliers for added reinforcement.

Make sure he is licensed and has no complaints lodged against him. You can check this by calling the Tennessee Board for Licensing Contractors at (615) 741-5555. If you hire an unlicensed contractor, little can be done if he does not fulfill his obligations because there is no way the state can discipline unlicensed contractors.

Before you chose a contractor, get quotes from several different contractors to make sure you get a fair price. Never pay more than 1/3 of the cost up-front.

Get everything in writing – make sure you and your contractor sign a written contract that includes detailed specifications of the work to be done, the quality of materials to be used, waste disposal and site cleanup.

Remember that a good contractor will take the time to review the work with you and answer questions about how and why things were done.

Beware of high pressure sales tactics and contractors who show up at your door with extra material or because they have done a job in your area. This is a common practice among itinerant “storm chasers” – scam artists who specialize in door-to-door “contracting” after major storms.

Make sure there are no blanks on the contract, and obtain a copy for your records. Avoid changes after the contract has been signed; they can be costly.

You are your own best advocate – by taking the time to research your decision and get a detailed, written agreement, you can avoid serious and expensive problems.

If you have questions, concerns or complaints, contact the Division of Consumer Affairs at (615) 741-4737 or toll free at 800-352-8385. We can try to mediate with an unlicensed contractor, but may only be able to place the contractor on our ``Buyer Beware’’ list if he does not respond appropriately.

You can file a licensure complaint against a contractor at the Board for Licensing Contractors by calling (615) 741-8307, or going to our website at www.state.tn.us/commerce/boards/contractors/index. The contractors’ board can try to mediate complaints made against licensed contractors so that repairs are made, but cannot intervene to get consumers’ money back.

###